

Ulcombe Church of England Controlled Primary School

The Street
Ulcombe
Maidstone
Kent
ME17 1DU

Diocese: Canterbury

Local authority: Kent
Dates of inspection: 12th December 2011
Date of last inspection: 13th May 2009
School's unique reference number: 118631
Headteacher: Vincent Hampton
Inspector's name and number: Matthew Crick

School context

This small rural village primary school serves children who are predominantly of white British origin. The intake is drawn from a wide area and there is a marked proportion of children from the Gypsy/Roma community. The school is currently undersubscribed with 55 children on roll taught in three classes. Plans to further enhance the quality of the building are progressing well.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Woodchurch Church of England Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

Children benefit from a strong commitment to providing fully inclusive education within the context of a clearly distinctive Christian character. There are well developed partnerships with key groups in the community and the school is working to extend the scope of opportunities provided.

Established strengths

- Clear understanding of how the school's distinctive Christian character is used to nurture all of the children it serves.
- Strong links with the church and a drive to expand the range of activities provided to enhance the life of the community.
- Use of worship to inspire the spiritual growth of those in the school family.

Focus for development

- Ensure that governors are involved in the formal monitoring of worship and RE
- Embed the school's Christian values by enabling all stakeholders to understand and articulate them.
- Record all monitoring to enable further development and progress in RE and collective worship.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good at meeting the needs of all learners

Parents and children speak positively about how they are welcomed into the school and cared for. There is a strong sense of belonging that stems from the clear emphasis placed on how everyone cares for each other. One child spoke about all children making a conscious effort 'to make sure everyone can join in.' Children feel their opinions matter and refer to how they have a say in a wide range of aspects of school life. Parents spoke of their confidence in the prompt, open and considerate way in which sensitive issues are addressed. Children have a positive view of Religious Education (RE) and collective worship. They are confident in linking issues covered in RE and collective worship to their everyday lives. They can give examples from the Bible where generosity and forgiveness can be seen and they possess the vocabulary to do this with confidence. The school has recently begun to look at Christian values. Children easily linked these Christian values with why they engage in a good range of charitable activities. The School Council has raised a significant amount of money and

had a clear role in deciding how it is to be spent. This reflects the school's strength in enabling children to link what they learn to school life in general. The children have a secure awareness of the nature of the Church nationally, while RE gives them a good sense of the world-wide nature of key religions. Christian symbols are used to good effect throughout the school, especially in a bright and inviting entrance area. Space is given for reflection inside the school, though it is limited in outside areas. Bright and attractive displays relating to work done in RE are to be found in classrooms and corridors. Since the last inspection the school has ensured there is a clear reference to its Church status in key documents.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The headteacher organises and plans worship that makes very good use of diocesan material. The content is very well thought out and allows aspects of the Church year to be incorporated into collective worship. The ministry team is supportive in the strategic planning of worship and in its weekly leadership. Children speak very positively about worship and the way in which they relate issues raised to school life in general. In an act of worship, which was well planned and led, the children were quick to link the picture prompt used to the Christmas story and the school's Golden Rules. The children's level of involvement in worship was high and varied, with a very high degree of engagement. While they are not involved in the planning of weekly worship, children do play a clear role in the preparation for termly services at the church. Work observed in the top class's RE lesson was to form part of a presentation in the school's Christmas service. The strong link with The Family Trust and arrangements for the 'King's Squad' to be the only after-school club on a particular day reflect the high priority given to broadening the children's experience of worship styles. There are clear opportunities for prayer throughout the day. The 'Question of the Week' linked to Christian values and re-vamped 'prayer chests' have been effective in engaging the children's interest in the prayer life of the school. Parents and children are clear about the importance of worship in the life of the school and value the contribution it makes to their spiritual development. Records of peer monitoring of worship by staff demonstrate how this has enhanced development. Governors join the school for services at the church and so are aware of what happens then, but they do not monitor regular worship. This means the views of all stakeholders are not fully taken into account. Children are familiar with a range of Anglican tradition and practice and the headteacher has a clear idea of how development of this aspect forms part of his vision for further enhancing worship.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good

The school benefits from a strong and mutually supportive senior leadership group. Governors know the school well and are able to articulate their clear understanding of the school and commitment to its distinctive Christian character. The involvement of all staff groups and governors in the development of the mission statement ensured a shared understanding of the Christian rationale for the school. This is re-enforced by a well established induction process for staff that ensures they are aware of the school's Christian character. The school improvement plan incorporates issues identified in a well organised review day that included staff and governors. Monitoring of RE by staff has informed the SIP; led to robust and effective planning; and enabled other staff to take a leadership role in this area. Since the last inspection the SIP has included reference to both RE and collective worship and the significance of the school's Church nature is now clear in key documents. Governors have not carried out direct monitoring of RE or collective worship, or recorded any informal monitoring, and so rely on reports from the headteacher. Assessment of children's progress and attainment in RE has begun and there is a clear plan for further development. The way in which the headteacher and staff are introducing children to Christian values is an example of the thoughtful, reflective and informed approach taken to driving improvement with regard to the distinctive Christian character of the school. Children confidently identified and linked Christian values with their support of charitable causes, which is testament to the strong sense of shared values among staff and pupils. The school recognises the importance of embedding these values by sharing them more widely, enabling all stakeholders to understand and articulate them. The priority given to the Kingsquad underlines the leadership's commitment to promoting the distinctive Christian character of the school. Work in establishing a 'messy church' and adult prayer group sessions led by the church demonstrate strong links between the school and church and means that the school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. These significant partnerships enable a good range of stakeholders to work with the school for the benefit of the community it serves. The

impact of this work is assessed through the effective use of surveys that inform future actions.

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